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ABSTRACT

The creative and accurate interpretation of phenomena is central to achieving an understanding of the world and our fellow man. However, the process of interpretation is little understood by behavioral scientists and educators. Hermeneutics promises greater insight into the nature of interpretation of phenomena since the foundation of a hermeneutic stance transfers the point of attention in analytic tasks from causal, psychological explanations of behavior to a position which keeps clear an understanding of the existential nature of the self within social environments. Research into interpretive understanding must adopt such a hermeneutic stance in order to expand current conceptions of human psychology. (CH)

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WHAT IS HERMENEUTICS?

AN EXPLORATION INTO THE NATURE OF INTERPRETATION AND UNDERSTANDING

Presented to the Central States Speech Convention

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April, 1974

by

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WHAT IS HERMENEUTICS?

AN EXPLORATION INTO THE NATURE OF INTERPRETATION AND UNDERSTANDING

Recently hermeneutics has had impact on nearly all disciplines concerned with the study of man and his works. With this proliferation a clear formulation of hermeneutics is both more pressing and more difficult. In a limited sense hermeneutics is concerned with the foundation, principles, and methods of <u>interpretation</u> particularly of texts and cultural products. But this glib formulation is insufficient: it conceals more than it reveals about hermeneutics. The question of "what is hermeneutics" is itself a hermeneutic problem, an interpretation. The answer is not neutral but has implications for all human activities concerned with interpretation, be it of laws, literary texts, recorded conversations (eg., the White House tapes), communicative behavior, or everyday existence. The answer must give an account of what interpretation itself is.[1]

The emergence of hermeneutics as a central concern in many disciplines today is no accident. For as Beardsley proclaimed: "The twentieth century . . . is an age of interpretation. Interpretation of dreams, culture, laws, works of art, neurotic behavior, news and the course of history, have been carried to the highest levels of refinement and precision."[2] Not only is interpretation central to many professional and scientific activities but it so fills our everyday existence that Palmer is led to suggest that, "existing itself may be said to be a constant process of interpretation."[3]

The major thrust of the present paper is to work out the

development, formulation, and relation to other studies of current hermeneutics, particularly as presented in the works of Heidegger and Gadamer. Other papers in this series will explicate the implications of this formulation for a variety of concerns in speech communication.[4] To contextualize this explication, allow me to first give a short history of the hermeneutic problem.[5]

Hermeneutics, while having roots in early Greek thought and probably being closely related to the messenger god, Hermes, received its earliest systematic formulation as the principles underlying proper Biblical interpretation. Hermeneutics was to establish the method, as Schrag described, "whereby the text was to be permitted to speak for itself, to show its meaning without reductive explanations."[6] The speaking word of the Bible through hermeneutics was to take precedence over arbitrary and utilitarian interpretations imposed by the church or present readers but in such a way as to reveal the "word" in its relevance for current existence.

Hermeneutics gained greater prominence when, in the nineteenth century, Wilhelm Dilthey saw in hermeneutics a foundation for the human sciences and a distinctive method for humanistic studies. Palmer presented the basic thrust of Dilthey's work. "To interpret a great expression of human life, whether it be a law, literary work, or sacred scripture, calls for an act of historical understanding . . . an operation fundamentally distinct from the quantifying, scientific grasp of the natural world; for in this act of historical understanding, what is called into play is a personal knowledge of what being human means."[7] The hermeneutic method in his studies was to allow non-egocentric mental recreation of the mental processes in a culturally or temporally separate person's creation of a life "expression" (an artifact, behavior, writing, etc.). In other words,

Dilthey's hermeneutics was to allow objective knowledge of "foreign" life experiences which were considered to be essentially psychological. This essential perspective and method led to, among other things, the Verstehen operation in psychology and sociology and begins to show the possible relevance of hermeneutics for communication research.

It was Heidegger's explication of the implicit structures of existence, however, which radicalized the hermeneutic task, took it beyond textual and cultural interpretation, and made the question of hermeneutics central today. Heidegger linked hermeneutics with originating thought and fundamental understanding and, thus, with the central process of existing itself. Dasein, that is, human existence in a World, stands in the "event of unconcealment"--the disclosure of what things are in this mode of existing.[8] The explication of this "event" which is interpretive-understanding is the central hermeneutic problem today. Hermeneutics is thus not so much a method as a task in the modern formulation. Schrag, in opposing the hermeneutic task to assertive or representational thought, summed up the contemporary movement as follows: "Hermeneutical thinging discloses the world as a dwelling in which various styles of behavior can occur. Hermeneutical thinking is a path or a way to an understanding of the world as a region of involvements. It uncovers not denotable objects, although assuredly such denotation may accompany it, but rather the historical self-understanding of the experiencer as he is lodged in the world, advancing his projects amidst a welter of existential possibilities. . . . Hermeneutical thinking is thought with a thinker, embodied and historicized."[9] Primarily, then, the breadth of subject matter rather than the hermeneutic task changed in the movement from the earliest to the present formulation. The present day task is to show how the World "speaks" and how it speaks in such a way as to be relevant for man's current existence. From this compressed and perhaps not yet comprehensible gloss, let us now unfold the

constitution of Heidegger's radicalized hermeneutics in such a way that it shows its relevance for speech communication research.

PHENOMENOLOGY AS THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

Hermeneutics would not have been possible in its modern form without the phenomenological explication of a "fundamental" understanding of human experience. Phenomenology allowed Heidegger to break from the psychological or subjective and objective bias of scientific and everyday concepts.

Phenomenology came into prominence against the background of the narrow naturalistic and positivistic conception of science and the general skepticism of the late romantic period. Phenomenology was the attempt to found a rigorous science to break skepticism and yet avoid the inadequacies of the natural sciences, particularly when applied to the study of man and his products. The major inadequacy of the natural science which phenomenology hoped to avoid was that of objectivism which had arisen from the naive acceptance of Cartesian dualism. Naturalism in its attempt to elimimate human subjectivity from science restricted study to the physical and empirical--the "things" assumed given once and for all. Husserl, the father of phenomenology, in his critique of naturalism demonstrated that in order to be consistent naturalism must also find support for itself and its methods "out-there" in the empirical world. This it could not do. As Strauss presented Husserl's arguement:

> As theory of knowledge naturalism must give an account of natural science, of its truth or validity. But every natural science accepts nature in the sense in which nature is intended by natural science, as given, as "being in itself." The same is of course true of psychology which is based on the science of physical nature. Hence naturalism is completely blind to the riddles inherent in the "givenness" of nature. It is constitutionally incapable of a radical

> critique of experience as such. The scientific positing or taking for granted of nature is preceded by and based upon the prescientific one, and the latter is as much in need of radical clarification as the first. Hence an adequate theory of knowledge cannot be based on the naive acceptance of nature in any sense of nature.[10]

The natural science claim, to be derived from nature separate from historical man which is the ground of its validity, thus could not be supported. Natural science, like the phenomenology being developed, must be grounded in human consciousness, in human life experience. As Strauss continued: "The adequate theory of knowledge must be based on scientific knowledge of the consciousness as such, for which nature and being are correlates or intended objects that constitute themselves in and through consciousness alone . . . ."[11] Furthermore, naturalism could not give an adequate account of experience or understanding. Starting with the notion that experience is caused by objects and events of the empirical world, much of our experience was left unexplained. If experience is simply the sum of sense impressions--sensory excitation by stimuli from the outside--how is it that we experience a complete chair while our sense impressions are only from one side? Or how is it that we experience groupness even after all empirical characteristics of the group have changed, or experience a melody as the same when played by different instruments in a different key? Or how could the same empirical object be experienced differently depending on the setting or the person's prior activity? The various naturalistic explanations, that images or concepts form in the head or that memory traces are left, have no experiential validity and can be understood only as metaphysical constructs since we have never seen nor directly experienced any of these things.[12] Nothing is gained from these explanations, nor is the position from which such explanations would have

to be made attainable. Consciousness exhausts what can be certainly known. The naturalistic position became even more problematic in the expansion of naturalism to the observation of human behavior. To maintain objectivity the natural scientist assumed that the behavior had to be objectified as an empirical thing in the physical world and given a physical description. As such the behavior could not be understood in itself as a human product, work, or expression. Science had to then invent abstract metaphysical categories and psychological theories to explain what was already understood about the behavior (its unity and directedness) and to reconnect the behavior to the human actor. Further, historical understanding was a constant problem for naturalism since the historical events were not subject to observation.

A final problem the phenomenologists found with naturalism was that of relevance. If the scientific observer was outside of the current historical society so that his objectivity would not be threatened by the community's values and practical interests, how could he decide which questions to ask and how was his objective knowledge to be reported in an understandable way to everyday actors? And if he did not conduct value-neutral research what would happen to his quest for objectively valid knowledge? In practice he became bifurcated--having a life as a supposedly value-neutral scientist and one as a human subject. Perhaps more importantly the scientist was not as value-neutral as he claimed since he naively accepted without question the values and prejudices which were contained in historically developed scientific methods and concepts. The scientist was not aware of, nor did he have a way of investigating, the biases and commitments contained in science itself.

Phenomenology was able to overcome these inadequacies by grounding science in conscious experience rather than in the natural world. In so

doing the separation between "objective" world and "subjective" persons was shown to be an abstraction from the more direct experience of subject and object combined in "intelligible World." The understanding of human existence was shown to gain nothing from the insistence of primacy for the world in itself transcendent to the human subject. The very heart of the phenomenological position is that the holistic, socio-experiential World is more basic and real than the posited elementalistic natural world or subjective feelings. The transcendent natural world was not denied as existing; rather, for the purposes of describing the experience of this world, belief in the natural world as a necessary reality was suspended. This suspension allowed the exploration and explication of the implicit structures of consciousness which constitute the World as experienced but which were normally hidden or overlooked in paying attention to the structured World.

The subject-matter of phenomenology was, thus, the implicit conscious structures of understanding. The aim of phenomenology, explained Tugendhat, "is to clarify our implicit knowledge of the structures of our experience and of the different types of our experience".[13] As a rigorous science, phenomenology further suspends all presuppositions, theories, or other abstractions imposed on experience. What is left after these suspensions is the necessary structures of conscious experience itself which may be made explicit in the phenomenological description.

Conscious experience, for the phenomenologist, was the source and validator of all knowledge. Unlike some, however, the phenomenologists formulated conscicusness and conscious experience as pre-subjective and objective, thus neither psychological nor personal.[14] Consciousness as prior to reflection was both human and Worldly, form and content, and pattern and patterned. For each conscious intention there was an object

of that intention. Feeling and cognition were always experienced as feelings and conceptions of something which was objectified as a correlate of the intention.

Due to its conscious intentional nature, perception for the phenomenologist could not be reduced to the sum of sense impressions. Experience is not impressions from one side, but is integrated and our perceptions are filled out--we see a chair, not simply the side toward us. For example, we perceive a room as a room even though each impression is only from a side and we have never seen it from all sides at once. The room can even be recognized when a person is presented with a floor plan drawn from the top--a perspective from which he has never seen the room. All this is possible since what is understood is an intended "room"--as an implicit structure of consciousness--seen from no where, rather than a perspective or learned mental concept of the room. Only on the basis of this "a-perspectivial," understood room can the judgement be made that the present view is a perspective, that impessions are only being received from one side, or even that the notion of a side becomes meaningful. The "room" and all interconnections thereof exist independent of each impression but is perceived in each impression. While the structures of consciousness are temporarily constituted, they are not simply the mental re-collection of past impressions or experiences. The "room" as an implicit conscious structure is a passive synthesis of all perspectives, prior experiences and future anticipation. This synthesis is not a process in the head, but is on the transcendental level. The "room" is beyond me yet manifest in my individual experiences. Each side, each impression, gathers and witnesses for the total room and presents the room as a constructed object in human experience in such a way that what is in front of me is not understood as separate from the room itself. Each

side is not experienced in itself but as remembering and manifesting the total room and an open ended horizon of action possibilities implied with a room. It is on the basis of this constructed experience rather than that which might be abstracted as the side in front of me, on which humans act. Understanding the action requires understanding the experience, not describing the natural world in itself or the individual perspective.

The dualism and resulting problems of naturalism were thus broken by showing that prior to the separation of man as a psychological being from World as an objectified entity, experience is consciously structured as more than simple sense impressions or empty mental states. An intelligible understood World is collected in each individual perception. Adequate knowledge which avoids the theoretical prejudices of naturalism but which is the result of a rigorous science can be founded on the description of consciousness itself.

EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY AS HERMENEUTICS

Husserl's early quest for a pure or transcendental phenomenology, where all presuppositions were suspended in the description of essences--the necessary structures of consciousness--proved impossible. The phenomenologist himself is an historical being existing in a particular language and cultural World--Lebenswelt.[15] The background of consciousness could not be reduced to a transcendental ego, but was an embodied experiencer already in a life World. This discovery did not change the basic phenomenological formulation of direct experience as the foundation of knowledge but rather the object of the phenomenological description. From a reflective analysis and description of the pure structures of consciousness, the aim changed to a descriptive explication of modes of living or styles of being in the World--from a pure to an existential phenomenological description. "In Husserl's shift to the antepredicative

evidence of a life-world, which is historicized from the bottom up, there is a concomitant awareness of the role of hermeneutic thinking and interpretive meaning. Thus when phenomenology becomes existential phenomenology, it becomes hermeneutic phenomenology at the same time. When the phenomenologist philosophizes, he is already embedded in the solicitation and projects of a historical life-world."[16] In existential phenomenology one's historical and linguistic prejudices rather than being suspended become resources for understanding since they are part of the very existence to be understood. In the complete formulation these prejudices are found to be intrinsically connected to the very ability to understand.[17] Heidegger's hermeneutics is one of the possible existential phenomenologies arising in this turn of phenomenology.

Heidegger presented the fundamental existential condition of man as being-in-the-World. Man finds himself in this World, however, not as an entity among other entities, nor as an ego looking at objects about him. What things are about him are connected to what he does--his existential projects. "[I]f I drink a little water, I interpret water to be a drink, but when I wash my hands, I interpret water in a very different way, and if I swim, I interpret it again in a third way, and if I want to put out a fire with water, it is again a new interpretation."[18] Man is not separate from a World of entities. Possibilities for his existence are manifest as the World. Even though in abstraction man may be objectified and separated from an objectified transcendent reality, in direct experience, which Husserl showed as the only foundation for certain knowledge, man and World are co-terminous. Reality--"what is"--is not distinct from the human experience. Man and World are not distinguished. What appears to man and "what is" are the same, since "what we call reality is just an interpretation."[19] As Mickunas and Oastler

explained: "For the phenomenologist, the manner in which the thing is seen constitutes the basis for one kind of definition of the thing. His understanding is that the meaning of the thing is defined in terms of the use to which the thing is put . . . . There can be no universal or ultimate definition of a thing; the meaning of a thing reflects the goals and objectives of the perceiver-agent."[20] Interpretations, then, are the real Worlds in which persons live. The physical or objectified description is only one of the many possible interpretations or ways the World reveals itself. Further, the physicalistic bias is a very narrow interpretation since existential possibilities on which man acts are cut away from the things as revealed.

Interpretation is not experienced as something the person does--as arbitrary or personal. Interpretation is not added to the World; it is the World. "Hence, the concept of consciousness which we have been discussing denies the primacy of the individual self as an interpretative principle, as well as denies the interpretative primacy of both sensual perception and discursive understanding. It affirms the primacy of world and the transcendance of being for an understanding of human consciousness, when these elements are grasped as an event of disclosure."[21] While the World is the actor's World related to his projects, he finds it coming to him as already interpreted, structured, and meaningful; even as limiting and shaping what he is and can do. "[I]nterpretation functions as disclosure. In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation."[22] And while the possibilities are possibilities understood

for the actor's existence arising in his movement into the future, they are not experienced as only his, but rather as possibilities of the World itself. As Palmer pointed out, "interpretation is not grounded in human consciousness and human categories but in the manifestness of the thing encountered, the realtiy that comes to meet us."[23] The World while defined as a human reality only in man's actions is not constructed by man but is itself the existential possibilities of human existence. In this sense more than each man interpreting the World, the World interprets man--says what he may do and thus be. Interpretation always precedes each individual as a social way of existing--as a social World. "I am given social interpretations prior to any particular activity of mine. So if we now should hear thunder, we call it an electric phenomenon because we are living in the country of Benjamin Franklin in the twentieth century; but a Roman would have said that Jupiter is angry, and in still another society they would say it is an omen. Therefore, there is an interpretative character to reality that belongs to it as such."[24] This has important consequences for the hermeneutic task. Since the possibilities for human existence are Worldly, the hermeneutic explication of the implicit structures of being-in-the-World is not a description of man but of the World--an explication of what things are as they are revealed to man. "The process of explicitating There-being's antecedent conprehension of Total Meaningfulness (World) Heidegger calls 'interpretation' (Auslegung) which, as we have seen, he in turn designates as 'hermeneutic'."[25] Further in this analysis, an identity which is very important for the course of hermeneutics becomes apparent. The event of grasping a Worldly configuration, making it available for hermeneutic explication, is the same as the grasping, understanding of a World in existing itself. That is, the description of Worldly possibilities is the same as the finding

possibilities being manifest in the World for one's own action. Hermeneutics, thus, becomes more than a methodological base or method for explicating the human life World. It becomes the fundamental character of existing itself. "Finally, I emphasized that hermeneutics, used as an adjunct word to 'phenomenology,' does not have its usual meaning, methodology of interpretation, but means the interpretation itself."[26] It is the mode of existing in the World where things of the World are allowed to reveal themselves for what they are.

HERMENEUTICS AS FUNDAMENTAL UNDERSTANDING

As has been shown, existing is essentially hermeneutic. A historical actor understands and makes explicit what things are in a World which is not distinct from what he is. Hermeneutics as this fundamental understanding is the very comprehension of what things are. Man lives in his fundamental understanding which is how the interpreted World is disclosed to him. Further, as Palmer suggested "understanding is not some faculty among others that man possesses; understanding is his fundamental mode of existing in the world."[27]

Thus hermeneutics in its self-elucidation must describe how understanding itself is possible. Kisiel, drawing heavily from Gadamer's work, explained: "Here hermeneutics is a 'theory of actual experiences that thinking is,' which is not intended to supersede methodological hermeneutics, but to explore dimensions which underlie the latter and to develop insights which might well aid them as well as correcting some of their possibly exaggerated claims, insofar as they neglect 'how much happening is operative in all understanding.' Once this is recognized, it follows that the most fundamental task of hermeneutic is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions under which understanding actually happens."[28] The hermeneutic character of

being-in-the-World is, as has been shown, a standing in the event of unconcealment where the World discloses itself in its possibilities, ~~for what it is~~. The condition for understanding is, therefore, the condition of the World's disclosure. The hermeneutic problem of how the World discloses itself in fundamental understanding as a total united reality composed of possibilities is the same as that posed by the phenomenologists when they asked how perception constantly excedes our impressions. How is it that we have a "room" and all the implied possibilities thereof, instead of a succession of impressions? While Husserl suggested that this synthesis was the result of the constitutive activity of a transcendental ego, Heidegger rejected this idealism and suggested instead that language as logos was the gathering, collecting force which brings the prior experiences and multiplicity of perspectives to stand as a unity manifest in the present movement. As Straus described: "Well, then, what holds all of these perspective views together and what holds them apart? 'It just wouldn't make sense' if the view of the narrow side of the table should suddenly be attached to that of the long side. Evidently it is the table that unites, divides, and perscribes the perspective views and their sequence. It is the WHAT, the 'sub-jectum' (in the original sense of the word), that persists as the same through all the separate views. In every moment we see the table; yet we never see it whole and complete, but always only in perpectival relation to ourselves. Language makes it possible for us to break through this linkage and to characterize the WHAT of the manifold views with one single word as one and the same."[29] Language makes possible, thus, a history and future for things and allows things to speak to man--i.e., disclose their possibilities for his existence. It is language which allows us to see the part of the room in back of us--which gives us the understood whole on which we make the judgment that impressions are only from one side. Language gives us the

WHAT of which this is a side. Language reveals that which is around the corner, and gathers in one instant the temporal constitution and future possibilities. Language is the gathering, revealing of possibilities. Language, thus, is the self-display of "what is." Language coming to pass in "speaking" is the hermeneutic event of unconcealment of the World, the construction of man's reality and, thus the event of fundamental understanding. "Viewed hermeneutically, our speaking is a comprehending interpretation of that which reveals itself from itself."[30] The fundamental condition for understanding--the showing of what things are in their relevance for man--is language.[31] The language which makes this self-display of World is not an object or thing which can be seen as doing something else. Language which has its "reality" in speaking "always withdraws in favor of that which shows itself."[32]

The question may be asked what is the "what is" that is displayed--unconcealed--in language? Heidegger suggested that it is a speechless pregiven--the level of the not yet understood. Gadamer, in his extention of the analysis will not even allow this much hint of a distinction between the displayed "what is" and that which is displayed. As he argued: "What comes to language is indeed something other than the spoken word itself. But the word is only a word through that which comes to language in it. It is there in its own sensuous Being only in order to sublimate itself into what is said. But in turn, that which comes to language is not a speechless pre-given, but rather receives its determination in the word."[33] Language, thus, <u>is</u> what is in its self-display. It is human reality as expressed and gathered in speaking as a social reality.

As should be clear in this discussion, language is not simply added onto experience or a sign of something displayed, for language precedes the display making possible the very possibilities displayed. Furthermore,

language is not subjective, merely collecting and displaying a private World. Language is historical and social at the outset. It is not a collecting of one's personal past experience for language precedes each experiencer. It is rather the collecting in one place the total history leading to things being the way they are--e.g., the temporal constitution of the room. The historical, already meaningful nature of language is the condition for finding the World as already there--preinterpreted and constructed. We need not add meaning to the World, for it--with the power of language--expresses its meaning to us; in fact is that very expression. Language like all other cultural institutions integrates our experience and is the passing of tradition on to us. But language is a special institution since it makes all other institutions possible.[34] Because language is already meaningful and connected intrinsically with a historical world, man never speaks about the World to be heard and understood by others. More fundamentally, man 'lends" his voice to the World in language for its expressive disclosure which is heard by all who listen. To speak one must already have listened, listened to language speak the World. As Volkmann-Schluck described, "our speaking is not only accompanied by a listening to the language spoken by us, but that this listening even precedes speaking."[35]

This relation between language and "what is" not only has implications for how man understands things in his World, but also for the scientific (which is a particular mode of being-in-the-World) observation of behavior. Just as all things in language display themselves as human possibilities, the behavior is more than a simple impression. The observation is more than that of a physical thing even though the observation may be "supposed" as reduced to that. The behavior in language--as named--collects and displays its own World of possibilities and interconnections directly without the inference of personal meaning or the imposition of a theoretical structure. A behavioral science based in

hermeneutics studies behavior as works and manifestations of a World rather than as mere movements. The behavior is Worldly--has meaning--without the observer imposing the meaning on the behavior or the inference of subjective states behind the behavior in the actor.[36]

HERMENEUTICS AS AN EXPLICATION OF FUNDAMENTAL UNDERSTANDING

Language which is our experience and World is never explicitly expressed. Only words are manifest. Each word, however, implies all of language since "each word lets the whole of language appear as its suggestive unsaid ... ."[37] Gadamer suggested that:

> Every word breaks forth as out of a medium and has a relation to a whole, through which it alone is word. Every word permits the reverberation of the whole of language to which it belongs and the appearance of the whole of the world view which lies at its basis. Every word thus also lets be, as the happening of its fulfilled moment, the co-presence of the unsaid, to which it relates itself in a responsive and suggestive way. The occasional character of human discourse is not an incidental imperfection of its power of expression--it is rather the logical expression of the living virtuality of discourse, which brings into play a totality of meaning in such a way that an infinity of extractable and interpretable meaning is tied up in it.[38]

Language is an interrelated system where the whole is collected and revealed in a particular way by each word. Each word is in this sense Worldly since it collects about it the whole World which is language. As Kisiel suggested, "Each word mirrors the totality of meaning... ."[39] Further, since language is historical, each word collects the whole of mankind's past and future revealed in a particular way. "Each man is in each instance in dialogue with his forebears, and perhaps even more and

in a more hidden manner with those who will come after him."[40] Each word carrying the whole of tradition is our access to past experience; our ability to make explicit how our present experience was constituted; and our insight into what we are as historical beings.[41] Most of what is said is hidden in the word but carried as its necessary implications. In our everyday and instrumental use of words we forget (let be concealed) the interconnections which make things what they are and the implications remain hidden. We may come to understand our experience, how it arises in an explicit sense, however, by unfolding the interpretive constitution--the World--collected in the words. In this unfolding where the interconnections are brought out of hiding, we come to see more essentially and completely what things are. The unfolding is never neutral and thus may reinterpret us and call out a more aware mode of existence.

This linguistic explication, making explicit what is understood in understanding, is itself an existential project. The explication of understanding is, then, an interpretation (in the fundamental sense in which the word is used here), an interpretation out of itself. As Heidegger explained: "In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former. Nor is interpretation the acquiring of information about what is understood; it is rather the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding."[42] Man does not come to further understanding or its explication as a blank sheet, he is already in an understood World. He is an historical being and his further understanding is always rooted in his historical World. Explication of understanding like all other understanding is interpretation and interpretation is historical--connected to what is already understood. "In every case this interpretation is grounded in

something we have in advance--in a fore-having."[43] But the attempt to explicate what is understood appears to run into a paradox, for "any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted."[44] This "circle," however, is not a vicious circle discussed in logic but is the nature of understanding itself. As such it is at the root of all hermeneutic analysis.

In classical hermeneutics, the "hermeneutic circle" was a grammatical whole/part relation. The meaning of a word was only specified in a sentence, yet the sentence had meaning only in terms of the individual words. In the present formulation, as is apparent, the hermeneutic circle loses its abstract character as a movement between two things, whole and parts, and is shown as involved in the fore-having--the tradition. "The circle . . . is between a living tradition and its interpretation, which itself is part as well as parcel of the tradition. The interpretation is therefore partial, i.e., finite, governed by the historical situation in which it takes place. For we interpret a tradition from within a tradition. Tradition provides the basis for interpretation and invites new interpretation, and this renovating interpretation keeps the tradition alive."[45] The explication of understanding is a kind of "fusion" where the unconcealment of our fore-structure--our historical world--discloses possibilities for, but is not distinct from, our movement into the future. As Hirsch described: "'The real meaning of a text as it addresses itself to an interpreter . . . is always co-determined by the historical situation of the interpreter' (p. 280, my italics). Thus what an interpreter understands is neither wholly the result of his own perspective nor wholly that of the original perspective. It is rather the product of a fusion between these two, which Gadamer calls a Horizontverschmelzung."[46] The authentic way of hermeneutic investigation

as well as of hermeneutic living is careful understanding and surrender to language which is our World of possibilities, our tradition, and our most basic prejudice. It is the finding of the interconnections and roots of our experience in such a way as to allow history to interpret us and open previously unseen but traditional possibilities for existence. The investigation while objective is not given as a once-and-for-all understanding. Our tradition, our fore-having, is our constant prejudice. Prejudices, far from invalidating investigations or our particular World, are the very conditions which allow our investigations and World to be understandable and relevant to ourselves and others. Hirsch presented Gadamer's position in the following way: "The fact that our interpretations are always governed by our prejudices is really the best guarantee that texts shall have significance for us. Instead of trying to overcome our prejudices--an attempt which cannot succeed and can only result in artificial, alien constructions--we should welcome them as the best means of preserving the vitality of our inheritance and our tradition."[47]

HERMENEUTICS AND INTERPRETIVE PARADIGMS

The tradition or fore-structure, which is being unfolded as our understanding and at the same time is involved in the unfolding, can be abstracted as various interpretive schemes or paradigms (sensitizing rather than categorical theories). In this abstraction, the schemes (since they are linguistic) collect tradition in a particular way. The traditional world gathered, however, is more narrow and distant than the unfolding of fundamental understanding and does not call out new ways of being. We may call investigations with interpretive paradigms "inauthentic hermeneutics." But this is not meant to diminish their importance, for interpretive research is becoming a widely used, scientifically-safe alternative to the metaphysical natural science perspective. All that is meant is that, as a background for this objectification, there is a more encompassing

and ongoing fore-structure which remains unexplicated.

Like all explication nothing new is found that was not already implied in the fore-structure or, in the abstract sense, the paradigm. But the paradigm helps this understanding get explicitly laid out as it mirrors the totality of this more narrow historical understanding. Habermas' description of the place of an interpretive scheme in textual interpretation applies as well for any behavioral description. "It is true that the complex preunderstanding of the entire text has the role of a variable interpretive scheme into which individual elements are integrated in order to render them understandable. But the scheme can only make the elements it encompasses understandable to the extent that it itself can be corrected against these 'data.' The elements relate to the interpretive scheme neither as facts to theories nor as expressions of an object language to the interpretive expressions of a metalanguage. Both, the explicandum and the explicans, belong to the same language system."[48]

The interpretive paradigm is, thus, a special kind of hypothesis. It is neither independent of the data able to explain them, nor simply abstractions from sense impressions. The schemes are a priori to but intrinsically connected with that which is to be described. "Pre-understanding is not, of course, a neat and simple model for the hypothetico-deductive process, since the data it explains are constitutive to a large extent by the hypothesis itself."[49] But as Hirsch went on to make clear, the hypothesis is not simply self-confirming. "The hermeneutic hypothesis is not completely self-confirming since it has to compete with rival hypotheses about the same text, and is continuously measured against those components of the text which are least dependent on the hypothesis."[50] Further, even as an abstraction the paradigm is historical, rather than given once and for all. Not only is the scheme constitutive of data as

it institutes a World in which the data are found, but the data are also constitutive of the scheme. The data, be it behavior or a text, has its own World. In the hermeneutic circle the two Worlds "fuse." In the abstraction which brings the scheme and data back into view both are different but in a way already implied in the openendedness of their World. The paradigm is, thus, being shaped in its own being made explicit. The paradigm interprets the data and the data interpret the paradigm.

Many interpretive paradigms have been formulated and several are being given extensive use in the sciences of man. Let me here discuss only a few. Others include those used in clinical settings the various variants of Verstehen in historical, social, and cultural studies, and many forms of literary and dramatic criticism.

The most basic and prevasive scheme which has been abstracted is that being used by ordinary language philosophers in their conceptual analyses.[51] They have objectified the whole of ordinary language. Their task in Austin's formulation is to solve philosophical problems and disagreements by making explicit the relevant distinctions and conceptual decisions carried in ordinary language.[52] Like all interpretive research (and in fact, all research) nothing is found that was not already implied in the objectified fore-structure.[53] The distinctions and concepts--i.e., data--being uncovered must be assumed as already known by the analysts in their having language but just now being made explicit. The paradigm, in this case ordinary language, is thus explicated out of and interpreted by itself.

A second very broad interpretive paradigm is competence rules. The "way man relates things" is here abstracted. In the linguistic variant, grammar as a fore-structure is assumed by the investigator who tries to make explicit this grammatical competence by investigating objectified linguistic performance. It is important to note that the linguist is not

abstracting the rules from the linguistic output. Linguistic rules are assumed in deciding which is a grammatical performance in which the rules are actualized. In the sociological variant where rules of appropriate behavior are sought the same analysis follows with the exception that grammaticality is given a broader interpretation.[54]

Another important interpretive paradigm and one which probably comes the closest to "authentic hermeneutics" is structuralism. The objectified form structure considered in this perspective is the structural relations which make the world what it is for man. Since I discuss this paradigm at length elsewhere suffice it to say that as a methodological position, structuralism examplifies the same principle of being assumed and made explicit out of itself as other interpretive paradigms.[55]

HERMENEUTICS AND SPEECH COMMUNICATION

Hermeneutics, from its historical and current formulation, is relevant to the study of speech communication on many levels. Perhaps most obviously it offers much to the study of the oral interpretation of literature.[55] Hirsch and Palmer in their consideration of literary criticism and the fundamental link between "saying" and understanding suggest that more than simply performance, oral interpretation <u>is</u> literary understanding.[56] The "performer" is the barrowed voice which allows the text to interpret those who listen. Hermeneutics also offers methodological principles and methods for cultural and historical studies of all kinds. Rhetorical and public address study could therefore be enriched in a working out of hermeneutics in relation to these areas of investigation. A hermeneutic of communication in business and industrial settings may even be possible.[57]

The greatest value of hermeneutics, however, does not come in its offering a general theory of interpretation nor in its demonstration of a

methodological stance which is relevant to and possibly integrative of the various subject matters in speech communication. Rather the most original contribution and widest implications for the study of human behavior and human existence come in the expanded understanding of what it is to "see" and what is originally given in understanding. One constantly sees more than meets the eye. This "more," which is linguistic, far from misleading us in our descriptions of behavior and in our everyday understanding, is the very condition for understanding and the possibility that things may call us to be more than we presently are. Reductionism and imposition of an object language has lead most modern sciences to miss the World--the fact that what things are includes their past, future and interconnection with other things. Everyday existence has also suffered--been limited--by the cultural prejudice which leaves man the choice between seeing "correctly" (seeing as science posits reality) or holding onto a self created subjective reality. One only had the choice of either giving up subjectivity or objectivity. Phenomenology moved us beyond these narrow alternatives and hermeneutics grounded the opening to the World in the concrete life situation. The hermeneutic explication of historical possibilities stretching into the future which is man in present existence can enrich both scientific research and everyday life.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Richard Palmer, Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 8.

[2]Monroe Beardsley, "Modes of Interpretation," Journal of the History of Ideas, 32 (1971), 143.

[3]Palmer, p. 9.

[4]See Stanley Deetz, "Words without Things: Toward a Social Phenomenology of Language," QJS, 59 (Feb. 1973), 40-51, and "An Understanding of Science and a Hermeneutic Science of Understanding," Journal of Communication, 23 (June 1973), 139-159.

[5]For a more complete history see Palmer or in a review form, Thomas Sloan, "Hermeneutics: The Interpretor's House Revisited," QJS, 57 (1971), 102-107.

[6]Calvin Schrag, Experience and Being (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 116.

[7]Palmer, p. 41.

[8]Theodore Kisiel, "The Happening of Tradition: The Hermeneutics of Gadamer and Heidegger," Man and World, 2 (Aug. 1969), 358. I will use 'World' with a capital 'W' to suggest the already interpreted content of experience. The World is more then the sum of things physically about us. It suggests

rather the particular systematic relatedness of the past, future, and all other things with the things about us which arise when we project beyond ourselves into the realm of possibilities.

[9]Schrag, p. 113.

[10]Leo Strauss, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy," Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy, 2 (1971), 7.

[11]Strauss, p. 7.

[12]Erwin Straus, Maurice Natanson and Henri Ey, Psychiatry and Philosophy (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1969), p. 78.

[13]E. Tugendhat, "Description as the Method of Philosophy," Linguistic Analysis and Phenomemology, eds. Mays and Brown (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1969), p. 261.

[14]The subjective misinterpretation, no matter how fruitful, given phenomenology by Donald Snygg and Arthur Coombs, Individual Behavior (New York: Harper and Row, 1949) and followed by Carl Rogers among others, has lead many persons to miss the originality of pure phenomenology and the breaking of the shackles of the subject/object problem. The prevasiveness of the misinterpretation has been added to by the greater availability and ease of understanding of the works by these psychologists. If phenomenology is to contribute to the critique of positivistic science and historical understanding and open new possibilities for research, the reduction of phenomenology to subjective psychology must be avoided. It is because

of this reduction in speech communication literature, that I present the present understanding of phenomenology rather than refer the reader to past literature.

[15]Aron Gurwitsch, Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 447.

[16]Schrag, p. 117.

[17]E. Hirsch, "Truth and Method in Interpretation," Review of Metaphysics, 18 (1965), 489.

[18]Julian Marias, "Philosophic Truth and the Metaphoric System," Interpretation: The Poetry of Meaning, ed. R. Hopper (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967), p. 47. The relation of phenomenology to early symbolic interactionist thought is apparent. As George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self, and Society (Chicago: University of Chicage Press, 1934), p. 129, wrote: "certain object come to exist for us because of the character of the organism. Take the case of food. If an animal that can digest grass, such as an ox, comes into the world, then grass becomes food. That object did not exist before, that is, grass as food."

[19]Marias, p. 47.

[20]Algis Mickunas and John Oastler, "Toward a Rapproachement," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 33 (1972), 244.

[21]Charles Scott, "Heidegger and Consciousness," Southern Journal of Philosophy, 8 (1970), 370.

[22]Marin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 190-191.

[23]Palmer, pp. 128-129.

[24]Marias, pp. 47-48. The distinction between what is and appearence is based on the judgement of something being constant but appearing in many ways. Fundamentally, however, all we have are appearences (even the appearence of constancy of the physical thing). The choosing and holding of one appearence as the "real" even if "scientifically" justified is the height of egocentricism and ontological bias. More importantly, if wish to understand human behavior , the appearence on which the behavior is based is more central than what is real.

[25]William Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), p. 67.

[26]Martin Heidegger, On the Way to Language, trans. Peter Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 28.

[27]Palmer, p. 227.

[28]Kisiel, pp. 360-361.

[29]Straus, p. 79.

[30]E. Volkmann-Schluck, "The Problem of Language," Southern Journal of Philosophy, 8 (1970), 378.

[31]Palmer, p. 139.

[32]Kisiel, p. 378.

[33]cf. Kisiel, p. 378.

[34]Peter Berger and Hansfried Kellner, "Arnold Gehlen and the Theory of Institutions," Social Research, 32 (1965), 112.

[35]Volkmann-Schluck, p. 376.

[36]See Deetz, "An Understanding of Science,"

[37]Kisiel, p. 368.

[38]cf. Kisiel, p. 368.

[39]Kisiel, p. 368.

[40]Heidegger, Way to Language, p. 31.

[41]Man is historical through and through and may well be said to have a history rather than a nature. Man is not historical in the sense, however, that he is what has happened to him since his birth. As Joseph Kockelmans, "Heidegger on Time and Being," Southern Journal of Philosophy, 8 (1970), 321, put the point: "Dasein [being there in the World] is its past in the way of its own Being which, to put it roughly, 'comes-to-pass' out of its future on each occasion. Dasein has grown up in a traditional way of understanding itself interpretatively. Its own past, which includes the past of its generation, is not something which just follows along after Dasein, but something which already goes ahead of it." Language implying a tradition and future collects all the implications into one place which is then labled 'man.'

[42]Heidegger, Being and Time, pp. 188-189.

[43]Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 191.

[44]Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 194.

[45]Kisiel, p. 360.

[46]Hirsch, p. 497.

[47]Hirsch, p. 503.

[48]Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interest (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 171-172.

[49]Hirsch, p. 504.

[50]Hirsch, p. 504.

[51]See for example John Stewart, "Concepts of Language and Meaning: A Comparative Study," QJS, 58 (Apr. 1972), 123-133.

[52]John Austin, Philosophical Papers, eds. J. O. Urmson and C. J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

[53]Palmer, p. 165.

[54]See for example, John Gumperz, Language in Social Groups. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971).

[55]See Sloan, "Hermeneutics."

[56]E. D. Hirsch, "Speech Performance and Theory of Meaning," A paper presented to the SCA National Convention, New York, November 9, 1973, and Palmer, p. 18.

[57]Though not call^ed by this name, a germ for the idea is suggested in David Smith, "The Master Symbol as a Key to Understanding Communication in Organizations," A paper presented to the SCA National Convention, New York, November 11, 1973.